

User Guide

v1.3

A Custom Build for Kodi v17 Krypton

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What is Special X?

Kodi is the excellent open source home theater application. It's been around for some time, starting out as XBMC which originally could only be installed on an Xbox. It has come a long way since then, and is now powerful software which can now be installed on virtually any device including PC, Mac, Android, Linux and even Raspberry Pi. Kodi comes without any media content and requires some work to turn it into a fully functional media center. Anyone can do this, but there is a bit of a learning curve and can be intimidating at first. Hence the popularity of the pre-loaded TV boxes which are 'plug and play' with no technical knowledge required. These boxes do have drawbacks though including long term reliability and security (see below) And best of all Special X is free!

Special X is a custom 'build' which you import into Kodi. This immediately turns Kodi into a ready to use full featuredl media streaming center. Although there is one tricky part to the installation, most people should have no problems following the detailed instructions in this guide. You should be up and running within about an hour.

Is it legal?

Kodi contains no illegal content, it's how you use it that might break the law. Builds like Special X contain software called add-ons which are used to access media content. Some of this content is legal, some is not, and it can be difficult to tell. If you use it to stream illegal content, that is entirely your choice and you accept the risk. Please read the section below on security. That being said, the risk to the end user appears to be virtually non-existent at this time.

Can I watch this content on my TV?

Absolutely (unless you have a CRT TV from the 90s). The details depend on the hardware you're using and are well beyond the scope of this guide.

Generally speaking, the best setup is to install Special X on a dedicated home theater computer directly connected to your TV. If this isn't feasible, you can often connect laptops and portable devices directly to your TV via an HDMI cable. Another convenient option is to attach a Google Chromecast device to your TV. You can Google Kodi+Chromecast to learn how to set it up.

You can install an official Kodi app on most mobile devices which will allow it to function as a remote control for a Kodi application running on another device! Be sure to check it out in the app store for your device. The app for Android is called Kore.

Before you begin...

There are some security issues you should consider before using Special X. Most people use this software on their computer or a pre-loaded box without giving the topic much thought. And that's probably fine. There is no evidence that anyone is looking at end users of this software at this time. But we live in changing times, and both the sophistication of surveillance technology, and the access authorities and bad guys have to it, seem to be increasing exponentially. When it comes to online security, it's probably not a bad idea to be just a little bit paranoid.

Robust protection will cost you some money (at most $100/year) but it's a good investment. You really shouldn't go anywhere on the internet ever without these safeguards, but it may be more important when you use software like this.

The first thing you want is a VPN. Free services typically are not trustworthy and provide inadequate bandwidth. Spend a few dollars. Private Internet Access.works well.

It's also not a bad idea to have an anti-malware application that monitors your internet activity in real time, in addition to the service that comes with your operating system. Again it's probably best to spend a few dollars here. But be careful because there are some really bad choices out there, including some that cost a lot of money. Malwarebytes Premium works well (the free version is very good but doesn't give you real time protection).

A recently discovered security flaw in Kodi reveals malicious code could be included in add-ons allowing attackers to gain access to your system. This is yet another reason not to buy pre-loaded boxes. Special X is clean but if you want to make sure, a security add-on is included with the build. See details in the add-on section below.

And please make sure your operating system has the latest updates!!!

Another consideration is bandwidth. You can stream some very high quality media all the way up to 4K with 7.1 surround sound with this software. This can consume a lot of bandwidth. If you don't have a good high speed internet connection, it can be a frustrating experience. And if you don't have an unlimited data plan, you will want to keep a close eye on your data usage

Initial Installation

Please visit the Special X website to download the latest version of Special X and to check you're using the latest User Guide (version number on the front page)

Okay, so this part is a bit tedious. The good news is you only have to do it once per machine. Plan on at least 20 minutes to get through it.

1. Download the latest Kodi beta installer for your operating system here. Get the release build, not the nightly build
2. Install the downloaded file. Run Kodi and grant it access through your firewall when asked. Make sure at least 'Private Networks' is checked. You can also safely check 'Public Networks' if you have adequate internet security. See the User Guide for details. You can always change it later.
3. From the home page in Kodi, click the Settings Icon (the 'gear' in the upper left) then File manager
4. Double click Add Source (the need to double click is kind of confusing for new users when everything else is single click, a quirk in the software that can hang you up if you're not aware)
5. Select None
6. Type the following EXACTLY http://noobsandnerds.com/portal (or copy and paste it. You will have to use <ctrl v> to paste in Kodi), then select Done
7. Click the box underneath Enter a name for this media Source, type noobsandnerds (or whatever you like really) and select OK
8. Go back to your Home Screen (press the escape (Esc) key repeatedly to back out of levels and return to the Home Screen)
9. Select Add-ons in the column on the left
10. Select the Package Icon in the upper left
11. Select Install from zip file
12. A warning will come up saying 'For security, installation of add-ons from unknown sources is disabled'. Click on Settings
13. Click the slider beside Unknown sources then click Yes to the Warning!
14. Take a deep breath, you're halfway there
15. Click Escape to go back a level and click Install from zip file again. This time you will see a list of sources
16. Select noobsandnerds (or whatever you named the source)
17. Select noobsandnerds_repo.zip
18. Wait for 'Add-on enabled' notification
19. Select Install from repository > noobsandnerds Repository > Program add-Ons >Community Portal > Install
20. Wait for 'Add-on enabled' notification

21. You now need to restart Kodi. Press Escape (or the ... icon on the screen) repeatedly to return home, then press the Power Icon followed by Exit
22. Restart Kodi
23. Click Add-ons in the left column of the home screen, hover over Program add-ons. Locate the Community Portal add-on you just installed. Click it and select Settings.
24. Now you have to tell the Community Portal where to find the Special_X.xxx.zip file you just downloaded. In Community Portal settings click the Community Builds tab on the left, then click Choose Backup Storage Location. Navigate to the folder *containing* the Special_X.xxx.zip file then click OK. You won't actually see Special_X.xxx.zip in the folder which is a little weird.
25. Click the Community Portal Icon, followed by Maintenance > Backup/Restore > Restore My Content > Restore A Locally stored build.
26. Now you should see the Special_X.xxx. zip file that you downloaded and click on it
27. Don't worry about backing up, just click Install. Choose to overwrite existing database files.
28. Restart Kodi

You're done!

Quick Start

If you're in a hurry to see how this works, click Add-ons then hover over Video add-ons. Click any of the icons and see where it takes you. Exodus is the most popular add-on by far and a great place to start.
Please be a bit patient, it can take a little while to do it's thing, especially the first time you use it.

Using Special X

Settings

The settings in the Special X build should be fine for most users but you do need to check the basic video and audio settings to make sure they match your system.

1. Go to the Home Screen then click the Settings Icon followed by System Settings.
2. In the Display section make sure Display mode shows Full screen rather than Windowed and check the resolution matches your display.
3. Then select the Audio section. Select the Audio output device to change it, the default is usually fine if you're not sure. Be sure to change the Number of channels if you're using a system with more than 2 speakers.

In addition to the system settings, the add-ons also have their own individual settings. Right click on an add-on and click Settings. See Tips on using Special X for some suggested changes to the add-on settings.

If you want to use Spotify in the Music Add-ons, you will have to enter your login credentials in the settings

Any changes you make to these settings will remain when you upgrade to a newer Special X build, you only have to do this once.

Updates

Most of the time Kodi will update itself and the add-ons without you having to do anything. Eventually though links will break and add-ons will be abandoned, they either just disappear, or transform into a new add-on which requires tinkering with Kodi.

If anything doesn't work as expected, go to the Special X website and check if there is an update which fixes the issue. You should periodically check the website even if everything is working well. There is a lot of development going on in this area and new functionality will be added to Special X as it becomes stable enough for everyday use.

System and add-on settings should remain after the update, but if you installed additional add-ons the update will likely delete them.

How to install Special X updates

1. Download the latest version of Special X here
2. Open Kodi and click Add-ons in the left column of the home screen
3. Click the Community Portal Icon, followed by Maintenance > Backup/Restore > Restore My Content > Restore A Locally stored build
4. Navigate to the location of the Special_X.xxx.zip file that you downloaded
5. Don't worry about backing up, just click Install. This time choose to **not** overwrite existing database files.

Tips on using Special X

Although there are a number of video add-ons included, the most popular by far is Exodus which will often give you the best selection and quality. cCloud TV is the best for live TV and the major league sports feeds in Pro Sport are excellent.

When you select a movie or TV show to watch, it may take a minute or so to generate a list of sources. Be patient, it's doing a lot of work. Generally (but not always) the best quality stream will be on top. I wouldn't bother if there isn't a choice with 1080p beside it (or at least HD which usually means 720p). It's not common, but if the first choice doesn't look like 1080p, stop it, back out and try the second one in the list.

Availability of high quality streams depends on a number of factors. You will have no problem getting last year's blockbuster. But if you're looking for the super popular movie that opened last weekend in theaters, you're probably going to have to settle for a cam (not always though!)

You may want to consider getting a free Trakt account. It tracks what you watch on different platforms and provides useful tools to find something to watch. Right click on a video add-on icon, select Settings, then look for reference to 'Trakt' or 'Accounts' and enter your login credentials

Kodi isn't just for video feeds. This build includes TuneIn Radio which can access virtually any live radio station on earth. Spotify of course gives on-demand access to a huge music library. You do have to enter your login credentials to use Spotify.

Be sure to enable visualizations and lyrics to enhance your music listening experience. You only need to do this once. While listening to music, press Escape Esc back to the home screen, then click the Remote Arrows icon in the upper left. From here, click on the screen if the controls aren't visible, then click the Settings icon lower right. From here, click Visualisation and select Milkdrop 2. Then click Lyrics icon > Get More… > CU LRC Lyrics. Now click the Lyrics icon (next to the Settings icon) to see lyrics for the song that's playing.

Kodi has many keyboard shortcuts, but 2 are particularly useful. The previously mentioned Escape "Esc" will get you back to the home screen. The backslash " \ " will toggle fullscreen and windowed mode.

If there are add-ons you don't use (Plex for example), you can remove them if you want. Right click the add-on, click Information, then Uninstall. If you update Special X, deleted add-ons will likely return and you'll have to remove them again. It is not recommended that you remove any add-ons in the 'Program add-ons' section as some of these are required for other add-ons to function properly.

Included Add-ons

Add-ons - Video

Exodus - by far the most popular addon with high quality reliable video streams
cCloud TV - specializes in TV streams, both Live and VOD
Stream All The Sources (SALTS) - another video streaming addon
Phoenix - another video streaming addon with good sports streams
Specto - fork - this is actually a sibling of Exodus. They both share the same parent, the late great Genesis
YouTube - interface to the familiar YouTube service. Required by several other addons for video feeds
Pro Sport - live sports streams, choose from NBA, NHL, NFL, MLB. Missed the game? You can likely get it from the archives
Plex - Kodi is great at streaming content from the internet, but not the best at organizing and presenting local media like home photos and movies. This is where Plex excels. You need a Plex Premium Pass and a Plex Server to use this addon

Add-ons Music

Spotify - Great source for virtually any available music. You do have to sign in with your Spotify credentials, either a free or paid account
TuneIn Radio - Streams radio stations from around the world. Works with or without signing in. If you encounter geo-restricted content you may have to adjust your VPN server location

Add-ons - Program

Community Portal - required to install Special K
F4mProxy - ignore, required by other addons
Specto Themepack - ignore, required by other addons
Security Shield - As discussed in the security section above, this add-on scans your system for potential security threats. Open the add-on and click Scan my system.

Visualizations

Milkdrop2 - a music visualization application. This needs to be activated. See Tips on using Special X above.

Version History

Special_X.100 - Initial build